

PARENTS TALK BACK

A bond between travelers

Recently, I found myself with some extra time before a flight at the Detroit Metro Airport. I passed by one of those mini spa boutiques that offer chair massages and overpriced nail services. I paused to look around inside and gauge how indulgent I felt on this mini vacation.

Was I really going to spend twice as much to get a manicure than I would pay at home?

It was a quick mental calculation. Nah, I wouldn't.

While I was having this minor internal debate, I noticed the toes of a woman standing next to me. More specifically, the warm beige-pink color of her pedicure caught my eye.

"I love that color," I said, looking up and realizing I was probably talking to a model. She towered over me, was super-thin and had perfect skin and hair.

"Thanks," she said, adding that it was her favorite shade and she wore it all the time.

She started looking through the display of polishes in front of us to see if she could find it for me.

Alas, they didn't stock OPI's Samoan Sand. Before I had a chance to make a note of the color in my phone, this stranger says to me, "You know, I have a bottle in my bag. Just take it."

What. Did she really just offer me her favorite nail polish? I weakly objected, but I didn't walk away, or stop her from rummaging in her makeup bag. When she couldn't find it in her purse, she opened her carry-on luggage and looked through her clear bag of products.

Eureka. She held it out like a precious gift.

Humbled and a little embarrassed by her generosity, I opened my own cache of traveling essentials.

"Let's make it a trade," I said. "Take this blush. It's my favorite." (For those playing at home: MAC's Warm Soul.)

"Sure," she said. "I'll try it tonight."

We swapped cosmetics and walked out of the airport spa, each in opposite directions. We didn't exchange names or Twitter handles. Maybe we recognized a kindred spirit in one another that travelers sometimes stumble upon.

It reminded me of an incident on a flight 20 years ago.

I was flying from Houston to London, and was seated next to a British man also in his early 20s. We were in the last row and struck up a conversation. He was hilarious in that dry British way, and I was boisterously friendly in that Texas way. We laughed for much of that transatlantic flight, even after they dimmed the lights and the other passengers fell asleep.

He was launching a new product line in an elite hair salon in Los Angeles. I asked for recommendations for my hair, although as a graduate student I was too poor to afford such things. We parted ways, and I marveled at my good luck for having traveled with such an enjoyable seatmate.

A month later, back in the bitter winter of Chicago, a package arrived at my door. It was filled with dozens of hair products and a note from that stranger thanking me for the great conversation.

I probably sent a thank-you note or email, but we never communicated again after that exchange.

For years, I held onto those bottles of hair gel, styling cream and volumizer, probably worth a few hundred dollars. It was a tangible reminder of the kindness of strangers, of meaningful exchanges that might only last minutes or hours, of bonds forged in that limbo space of going from one place to the next.

When I told my children about this latest unexpected airport interaction, my daughter said it sounded like the kind of thing you see happen in movies.

It kind of felt that way, too.

I'll treasure this bottle of polish as much as that hair gel.

Cosmetic products that remind me of what's truly beautiful in life — who you encounter on the journey.



AISHA SULTAN
Parents talk back

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Math scores slip, reading flat for nation's 12th-graders

By JENNIFER C. KERR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The nation's high school seniors are slipping in math and failing to make progress in reading, with just one-third of the 12th graders ready for the academic challenges of college.

Scores released Wednesday from the Nation's Report Card also show a widening gap between the highest- and lowest-performing students.

Only one-quarter of 12th-graders taking the test performed proficiently or better in math. In reading, 37 percent of the students were proficient or above — meaning they had a solid grasp or better of the subject material.

The average math score on the test last year was 152, down from 153 in 2013, the last time the test was given. It marks the first drop in math in a decade. For reading, scores were flat over the same period of time, and down five points from more than two decades ago when the test was first given to students in 1992.

Education Secretary John B. King, Jr., says schools have undergone "some of the most significant changes in decades" as teachers retool their classroom practices to adapt to new and higher standards.

"We know the results of those changes will not be seen overnight, so we need to be patient — but not passive — in continuing to pursue the goal of preparing all students for success after high school," King said.



Edyta Blaszczyk/Odessa American via AP

In this June 2014, file photo, Odessa High School graduates pose for a group portrait prior to the start of the commencement ceremony in Odessa, Texas.

Since 2009, more than 40 states have adopted the Common Core learning standards, which outline skills students should learn and know in math and reading by the end of each grade. They emphasize critical thinking, with less of a focus on memorization.

Peggy Carr, acting commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics, which administers the test, said the report suggests a pattern in reading scores that needs a closer look. "There is a gap, a widening of a gap of higher and lower ability students, and I think that's something we need to think about," said Carr.

Reading scores increased by two points for the highest-performing students, and were down six points for the lowest-performing seniors. Math scores saw no significant difference over two years for the

highest group of test-takers, but declined for the group of students at the bottom.

Bill Bushaw, executive director of the National Assessment Governing Board, said the scores were disappointing.

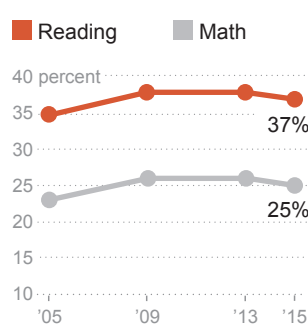
"We're not making the academic progress that we need to so that there's greater preparedness for post-secondary, for work, for military participation. These numbers aren't going the way we want," Bushaw said.

The report estimates about 37 percent of students, for both reading and math, scored well enough to be considered likely to possess the knowledge and skills to be academically prepared for college-level work. That is not much different than how well-prepared seniors were in 2013.

Other findings:

Student scores

The percentage of U.S. 12th-graders who scored at or above 'proficient' in national tests of reading and math since 2005:



SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics AP

- The average math score was 152, on a 300-point scale. The average reading score was 287 on a 500-point scale.

- No significant change was seen from 2013 in the average math score for any racial and ethnic groups. And it was the same for reading, with no real change seen from 2013 for any groups.

- In math, the average score for English language learners was higher last year, up six points from 2013.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress is considered a national yardstick by which to measure student achievement. The math test was given last year to about 13,200 twelfth-graders in public and private schools. About 18,700 students took the reading test.

OUT OF THE VAULT

Pendleton addition would have displaced Round-Up Park

If a platted addition to Pendleton had survived past the 1880s, the west end of the city would look totally different today.

A new subdivision named Sommerville was laid out on February 6, 1882, in the area bounded (roughly) by the Umatilla River on the north, the railroad tracks on the south, Southwest 10th street on the east and Southwest 18th Street on the west — land that now contains Roy Raley Park, the Pendleton Round-Up Grounds and the Pendleton Convention Center, and businesses including Mazatlan, Mac's Bar & Grill, G&R Truck & Auto Repair and the Albertsons property. According to the plat recorded at the Umatilla County Courthouse on Feb. 9, 1882, "Said town is



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Out of the vault

situated in the SE 1/4 of the NW 1/4 of Sec 10 T2 NR32E of Umatilla County Oregon."

The community was the brainchild of Stephen Lovejoy Morse, a prominent Umatilla County man in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and the brother of Aura (Goodwin) Raley. The plat was located near Morse's original homestead claim, and was named after a close personal friend and prominent Pendleton doctor, E.J. Sommerville. It was intended as an addition to Pendleton, and not a separate town, according

to Col. J.H. Raley, the county surveyor who laid out the streets and blocks. Sommerville's Main Street ran roughly east and west, and the streets in the town ran north and south and were named Birch, Taylor, Morgan, Colwell, Coffey, Libe, Ellsworth and Arnold.

Stephen Morse, a U.S. deputy marshal for 14 years, brought his family to Pendleton in 1864 and staked out his homestead claim on the north side of the Umatilla River, across the river from the Goodwin homestead. Among other exploits, he was involved in "moving" the county records from Umatilla to Pendleton in January 1869, a clandestine affair performed under the cover of darkness just after Pendleton was named the new county seat. The Morse family relocated to

Pilot Rock in 1894, where he owned a livery stable and was elected mayor in 1902. He died in May 1908 at his Pilot Rock home.

Morse's plat was vacated Jan. 7, 1884, just two years after it was laid out, and was absorbed into the city of Pendleton. The former burg was discovered in April 1916 when the Blewett Harvester Company bought property across from Round-Up Park (where the former Albertsons building now stands) to build a manufacturing plant.

Renee Struthers is the Community Records Editor for the East Oregonian. See the complete collection of Out of the Vault columns at eovault.blogspot.com

ODDS & ENDS

Man dumps non-toxic green dye into Alaska creek as a prank

KETCHIKAN, Alaska (AP) — Authorities say the green water flowing in the Ketchikan Creek that caused some panic and drew a response from multiple agencies was the result of a prank.

Officials have determined that the dye dumped into the water on Wednesday is non-toxic. Ketchikan police talked to the man responsible for the dye, but he was not arrested or cited.

"It was just a prank," Officer Charles Johnson told *The Ketchikan Daily News*. "He happened to come across some sort of plumbing dye that they use for testing — checking for leaks and stuff — and thought it'd be funny to throw it in the creek and make people wonder why the creek was green."

The Ketchikan Fire Department had also responded to the creek after reports of the green water around 4 p.m. While the incident may have initially been a concern for fire crews, police and residents who first discovered the green creek, Johnson said he did not see the activity as criminal.

"They already confirmed that the substance was non-toxic. ... I think the biggest problem was the slight panic of everybody trying to respond to a possible environmental disaster when there wasn't one," Johnson said.

Selfies with suburban Atlanta gator? Bad idea, police warn

PEACHTREE CITY, Ga. (AP) — Fearing Snapchat could take an ugly turn toward "snap chomp," police are warning people not to take selfies with an alligator in



Taylor Balkom/Ketchikan Daily News via AP

In this April 20 photo, Green dye makes its way through Ketchikan Creek in Ketchikan, Alaska.

suburban Atlanta.

Peachtree City police also advise residents not to feed the 6-foot gator known as "Flat Creek Floyd" as he soaks in the sun on Flat Creek, about 30 miles southwest of downtown Atlanta.

Peachtree City police Lt. Mark Brown tells WSB-TV that the gator's presence has "gone a little crazy" on social media.

Police say that when Floyd was spotted earlier this month, it was the first alligator sighting in the area in five years. Gators are common in parts of south Georgia, but are not usually seen in metro Atlanta.

Trump top suggestion to replace Robert E. Lee school name

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A YU-U-U-GE name is the most popular suggested replacement name for a Texas elementary school named after the top hero of

the Confederacy.

Donald J. Trump Elementary was the most popular suggestion with 45 submissions out of 240 received, according to Austin Independent School District officials.

The second-most popular suggestion was 34 submissions to keep the present name. Other popular namesakes included author Harper Lee and artists Russell Lee and Elizabeth Ney. Among those also receiving votes were Willie Nelson, Spike Lee and Stevie Ray Vaughn.

The Texas capital's school board voted last month to replace the Confederate general as the school name. It could decide on a new name May 23.

Man upset after restaurant runs out of soup

MANSFIELD, Texas (AP) — A Texas lawyer upset that he

wasn't provided a cup of soup during a recent meal has notified a restaurant owner that he'll sue if not reimbursed the \$2.25 for the soup.

Dwain Downing also is seeking \$250 in attorney fees for the time spent drafting a letter sent to Benji Arslanovski, who operates Our Place Restaurant in the Fort Worth suburb of Mansfield.

Downing says the soup was listed on the menu as part of a Saturday special. He says the restaurant offered no discount or substitution when it ran out.

The lawyer argued the menu amounts to a contract with the customer and Arslanovski violated the terms of the contract.

But the restaurateur says the menu makes clear the soup comes with a meal "while supplies last."

Michigan race offers runners beer at aid stations on course

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (AP) — Some running races wrap up with beer after the finish. A race in western Michigan is offering brew at aid stations along the course.

The "HopCat Full Circle 5k" is May 29, starting and ending at the HopCat brew pub in Grand Rapids.

New Holland Brewing, which makes "Full Circle" beer, is among those involved in the event. Organizers say a drink will be available at every mile.

Libby Swore, who co-owns Trivium Racing with her husband, Richard, tells *The Grand Rapids Press* they have been talking about doing an event with HopCat for several years. She says it finally came together and it's "a combination of a race and a bar crawl."

Aisha Sultan is a St. Louis-based journalist who studies parenting in the digital age while trying to keep up with her tech-savvy children. Find her on Twitter: @AishaS.